

## **Christchurch, Kurashiki Student group visit to Japan!**

After getting the chance to host a student from Japan I was really excited to be visiting Kurashiki and staying with them. I got up just a bit early, *3am!*, on Friday the 29<sup>th</sup> of September ready to be at the airport at 4.30. Once everyone finished saying goodbye we hurried on to the plane heading for Auckland and then on to the 11 ½ flight to Osaka which was so boring and tiring. Once we arrived at Osaka we took several trains including a bullet train to Kurashiki. That night we stayed at a hotel, we were really tired, and the next morning we got to meet who we would be staying with for the next 2 weeks. I got to stay with the person who stayed with me, it was good to see her again and even though I didn't speak too much Japanese and they didn't speak much English it was a good experience and I made good friends with their family. Over the next week we got to attend a Japanese school with our host students, it was probably the biggest experience of the trip. It was quite scary at first to have everybody staring at you and talking to you in Japanese as well as English but it was at the same time it was interesting and I made heaps of friends even though I couldn't always understand them. On Tuesday we also went to an elementary school for the day where we did our performances, played Japanese games and made udon noodles. On Saturday we had a welcome lunch with our host families and many other people, we also had to do our performance again. After that we went to our next activity, which was an exchange event with other Japanese students, we did Japanese games, origami, poi and more.

The next week we were together as a group, on Tuesday morning we did a Daruma workshop where we got to paint the faces of a Daruma, then in the afternoon we got to go on a tour of the Mitsubishi Motors car plant and see many cars getting put together and car parts being made. Wednesday was when we got to go to Hiroshima and this was probably the part I was looking forward to the most. We met early at 7.30 before taking a 3 hour ride to Hiroshima where we went to the peace park and looked at the Children Peace Monument and the thousands and thousands of cranes and A-bomb dome, which is the only building or one of the only buildings in the area of the bomb that survived, then we went to the peace museum which was really scary in parts but really interesting as well. After lunch we bussed to a ferry to cross over to Miyajima where we walked around patting all the reindeer and looked at the Miyajima Shrine. On Thursday we bussed to Okayama where we went sightseeing around Okayama and Kourakuen Gardens and before we got picked up by our hosts we had a deputy mayor visit at the town hall. Friday was our last full day, noooooo!!!! First we got to go to Washuzan Highland Amusement Park which was really fun and scary as well! That afternoon we went shopping which I really needed to do because I hadn't bought hardly anything since being in Japan.

The next day was our last day and even though I wanted to go home in some ways I still really didn't want to leave. Saying goodbye to my host family was really sad and emotional, my host sister and mother even cried!

This trip was such a life changing experience and I will never forget it!